

# **International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)**

## **FAO Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management: First Session**

### **Agenda Item 2**

#### **Current fisheries management practices with special consideration for small-scale fisheries**

##### **Statement**

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) welcomes the agenda paper COFI:FM/I/2024/2 and recognizes the outstanding quality of information papers INF.5, INF.6, INF.7 and SBD/1. ICSF supports the COFI decision to improve fishery management based on the precautionary and ecosystem approaches. In regard to small-scale fisheries, ICSF appreciates the recognition of collaborative management and community-based management in the agenda paper.

ICSF would very much like collaborative and community-based or customary marine and inland fishery management approaches to be tailored to become participatory management systems, consistent with para 5.16 of the SSF Guidelines, particularly in a gender-responsive manner. Participatory management approaches and systems, needless to say, would draw strength from the promotion and protection of a human rights-based approach as upheld in the SSF Guidelines, and by protecting tenure rights to fishing areas of small-scale fishing communities, and to territories of Indigenous Peoples. A human rights-based approach and secure tenure rights can be tailored to empower fishing communities, both men and women, Indigenous Peoples and local communities to participate in decision-making processes and to assume responsibilities for sustainable use of fishery resources (para 1.2 of the SSF Guidelines).

Participatory management systems need further strengthening to deliver on conservation benefits, including the protection of biodiversity of ecosystems and the aquatic habitat, and to transform to effective fishery management systems. At the institutional level, in addition to greater devolution of management through legislation at the subnational level to fishing gear groups, cooperatives or unions, Indigenous Peoples or local communities, the capacity of these actors needs to be enhanced to mainstream and sustain precautionary and ecosystem approaches and to bring a judicious balance between conservation and sharing of resource benefits.

Effective fisheries management systems should include responsible post-harvest practices as well, consistent with para 7.8 of the SSF Guidelines, to prevent overexploitation, driven by market demand, threatening the sustainability of fisheries resources, food security and nutrition. In this context, income from fish trade should be enabled to benefit small-scale fishers in an equitable manner throughout the value chain. Separate institutional arrangements may be made to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of all management systems.

To further improve conservation efforts under fishery management systems, social protection instruments are to be introduced at the sectoral and universal level to reduce overfishing pressures. This will benefit fishers, fishworkers and their families, particularly in the face of food insecurity and poverty, and the impact of climate change. It would resonate well with para 63 (f), the Outcome of the *First*

*Global Stocktake*, UNFCCC, UAE, dated, 13 Dec 2023, that urges Parties to promote the use of adaptive social protection measures for all to reduce the adverse effects of climate change on poverty eradication and livelihoods.

In addition, improving access to social development such as education, health, housing and sanitation, and guaranteeing decent work, can positively improve the outcome of fishery management by providing disincentives to overexploit fishery resources.

In the context of effective management of small-scale fisheries from an innovative, multi-dimensional approach, the Sub-Committee may advise FAO Members to reinforce their efforts to implement the SSF Guidelines, to develop national plans of action consistent with the SSF Guidelines, and to develop appropriate SSF legislation and policies in consultation with fishing communities, in particular.

To safeguard frontline marine area-based fisheries management measures, the FAO Members should be called upon to strengthen MCS measures, especially to stop incursion of large-scale, industrial fishing vessels, particularly bottom trawlers, into areas reserved for small-scale artisanal fishers using passive gear.

The Sub-Committee may develop guidance for fishery management and governance: (i) to assess how the status of targeted fish stocks varies according to the type of the management systems the stocks are under; (ii) to examine if fish stocks under participatory management such as collaborative, community-based or customary management systems pertaining to small-scale fisheries, or enjoying secure tenure rights, are better managed; and (iii) to investigate how social protection, social development and decent work contribute to better fishery management.

The Sub-Committee—to reduce errors and to achieve greater coherence across national and subnational definitions or characterizations of “small-scale”, “large-scale” or “industrial” fisheries, and to help draw meaningful inferences for effective fisheries management—may further develop a cost-effective reporting format for fishing fleet composition based on relevant factors and best practices around the world, and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including fishers and fishworkers.

Thank you Chair.